

EAST ROCKAWAY UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
East Rockaway, New York  
Regular Meeting of the Board of Education  
7:00 P.M., March 21, 2017– East Rockaway Jr. /Sr. High School  
Preceded by Student Athletes – Varsity Girls Basketball, Budget Presentation,  
Smart Schools Bond Presentation, and a Public Forum

MINUTES

Present: Members of the Board of Education: Patti Nicoletti, Keith Gamache, Neil Schloth, Kristin Ochtera, John Giannotti, Jr., Superintendent, Lisa J. Ruiz; Assistant Superintendent for Finance & Operations, Jacqueline A. Scrio; Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Technology; John Piccarella; District Clerk, Vitina Fazi

1. The meeting was called to order by Patti Nicoletti at 7:08 p.m. Neil Schloth led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Board President Patti Nicoletti welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated that Ms. Ruiz has planned two presentations. The regular meeting will follow the presentations. Ms. Nicoletti turned the meeting over to the Superintendent.

The first presentation was recognition of the girls' varsity basketball team. Mr. Vulpis spoke about the scholar athlete program and stated that all nine girls on this year's basketball team were scholar athletes. In order to qualify as a scholar athlete, the student must have a 90 or above average. Mr. Vulpis then introduced Coach Leary and spoke about her dedication to the team. Ms. Leary and Mr. Cange, assistant coach, then called the girls to the podium and presented them with a certificate and pin. Ms. Leary also mentioned that the team was awarded "Small School Champion" for this year and announced other individual student accomplishments. Ms. Ruiz thanked Mr. Cange and Ms. Leary for all they do for our students, and congratulated all the girls.

Ms. Ruiz spoke about the next presentation and gave a brief overview of the budget process to date. She then introduced Ms. Jacqueline Scrio who gave a thorough Power Point presentation explaining this year's proposed budget. Ms. Ruiz thanked the Board of Education and community for passing the past budgets and for putting programs in place for our students. Ms. Scrio asked if there were any questions. Ms. Scrio stated that the Smart Schools Bond presentation will take place at the April 20, 2017, meeting when more information will be available. Ms. Ruiz thanked Ms. Scrio and turned the meeting over to Ms. Nicoletti at 7:40 p.m.

2. Upon motion made by Keith Gamache, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the Minutes of February 28, 2017, were unanimously approved.
3. Acknowledge Receipt of Financial Reports – January 2017

4. Correspondence - None
5. Hearing of visitors on items in the Agenda: Ms. Randi O'Moore questioned Item B-3 (Health and Welfare Services). An answer was provided.
6. Action Agenda

A. Personnel

Ms. Ruiz stated that Ms. Kennedy's tenure (Item 1 below) will be formally recognized at the May 23, 2017, meeting.

Upon motion made by John Giannotti, Jr., and seconded by Keith Gamache, the following Items 1 through 4 were unanimously approved on a consent agenda

1. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, grant tenure to the following staff member on the effective date indicated and subject to satisfactory evaluation:

<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Tenure Date</u>
Erin Kennedy .....	Special Education Teacher .....	March 29, 2017

2. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, accept the following resignations:
  - a. Lisa Zeilberger, monitor, effective March 9, 2017
3. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the revised Spring Sports Coaching Schedule dated March 21, 2017.
4. Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, approve the following temporary assignments at the salary approved by the East Rockaway Board of Education on the Non-Contractual Salary Schedule for substitute workers for the 2016-2017 school year:
  - a. Gabrielle Velasquez, substitute teacher, effective March 13, 2017
  - b. Stephanie Lande, substitute teacher, effective March 22, 2017
  - c. Kristin Rochford, substitute teacher, effective March 22, 2017

B. Other Items

Ms. Nicoletti welcomed Ms. Stacy Lane and thanked her for her efforts in establishing the scholarship in Item B-2 below.

Ms. Nicoletti provided an explanation as to why the language contained in Item 5 below will appear differently on this year's ballot.

Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the following Items

1 through 6 were unanimously approved on a consent agenda.

1. Approve the revised Non-Contractual Salary Schedule for the 2016-2017 school year.
2. Approve the following resolution:

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, the President of the Board is authorized to establish the “Keith Lane Visual & Media Arts Scholarship,” to be awarded to a graduating student(s) pursuing a career in Journalism.

3. Approve the Health and Welfare Services Agreement between the East Rockaway UFSD and the Rockville Centre UFSD for health and welfare services for the 2016-2017 school year and authorize the President of the Board of Education to execute the agreement on behalf of the East Rockaway Board of Education.
4. Approve the Notice of Budget Hearing and Annual District Election of the East Rockaway UFSD and the publication of such notice as required by law in the “Oceanside, Rockville Centre, East Rockaway Tribune,” and “The Lynbrook/East Rockaway Herald.”
5. Approve the following resolution to authorize Capital Reserve Fund Expenditure Propositions:

WHEREAS, the Board of Education of the East Rockaway Union Free School District has determined that there is a need to undertake certain capital improvements and technology upgrades to commence during the 2017-2018 school year (“Projects”), as described in the outline contained in the 2017-18 Budget Proposal on file and available for public inspection in the office of the District Clerk (“Report”); and

WHEREAS, the Board desires that propositions be presented to the voters of the School District authorizing the expenditure of available funds for that purpose from the District’s existing Capital Reserve Fund for Building Improvements and Repairs, Capital Reserve Fund for Building Improvements and Repairs II, Capital Reserve Fund for Technology Replacement and Capital Reserve Fund for Technology Replacement II; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education is the lead agency for the purposes of SEQRA determinations regarding the proposed Projects; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that, upon the review and recommendation of the District’s Architect, the proposed Projects are hereby determined to be Type II actions, as defined by 6 NYCRR §617.5[c], which will have no significant impact on the environment, and which do not require any other determination, procedure or additional action under SEQRA; and, therefore, be it further

RESOLVED, that the Board hereby authorizes and directs that the following propositions be placed before the voters of the East Rockaway Union Free School District at the Annual District Meeting to be held between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. on May 16, 2017, at the East Rockaway Junior/Senior High School; and that the District Clerk be hereby authorized and directed to give notice of such proposition to be voted at said Annual District Meeting by publishing a notice thereof, four times within the seven (7) weeks next preceding the district election, the first publication to be at least forty-five (45) days before the election, and to have the necessary ballot labels printed for said vote in the form corresponding as nearly as may be with the requirements of the Education Law and the provisions of the voting machine rules of this school district:

**PROPOSITION NO. 2 (Capital Reserve Fund for Building Improvements Projects):**

RESOLVED, that the East Rockaway Union Free School District, is hereby authorized to undertake certain school building improvements (“Project”) during 2017-18 as described herein, to be funded from existing reserves at no additional cost to District taxpayers, to consist of the following: (1) Window Replacements at Rhame Avenue School – Phase 3; (2) District Wide Security Enhancements; (3) District Wide Interior Upgrades and Renovations; and (4) District Wide Electrical Distribution Panels; including equipment, construction and other required work, and preliminary, incidental and financing costs; and to expend therefor an amount not to exceed \$295,557.50, to be funded as follows: \$95,557.50 from the District’s Capital Reserve Fund for Building Improvements and Repairs, established on May 20, 2008; and \$200,000 from the District’s Capital Reserve Fund for Building Improvements and Repairs II, established on May 20, 2014; provided that the detailed component costs may be reallocated without any material change in the scope of the Project.

**PROPOSITION NO. 3 (Capital Reserve Fund for Technology Projects):**

RESOLVED, that the East Rockaway Union Free School District, is hereby authorized to undertake certain district-wide purchases and/or replacement of certain technology and telecommunications equipment and software (“Project”) during 2017-18 as described herein, to be funded from existing reserves at no additional cost to District taxpayers, to consist of the following: (1) Computer Hardware Upgrades; (2) Network Upgrades; and (3) Smart Classroom Upgrades; including equipment, construction and other required work, and preliminary, incidental and financing costs; and to expend therefor an amount not to exceed \$485,874.93, to be funded as follows: \$285,874.93 from the District’s Capital Reserve Fund for Technology Replacement, established on May 20, 2008; and \$200,000 from the District’s Capital Reserve Fund for Technology Replacement II, established on May 20, 2014; provided that the detailed component costs may be reallocated without any material change in the scope of the Project.

6. Accept the following donations:

- a. Checks from the Centre Avenue PTA for the following:
  - i. Centre Avenue student field trips in the sum of \$630
  - ii. Sixth grade activities for the Class of 2023 in the sum of \$960
  - iii. Curriculum enhancement for a fourth grade field trip in the sum of \$200
  - iv. Donations and supplies for the kindergarten classrooms in the sum of \$103.92
  - v. Curriculum enhancement for a fourth grade field trip to Old Bethpage in the sum of \$200

C. Budget Transfers - None

D. Upon motion made by John Giannotti, Jr., and seconded by Kristin Ochtera, the CSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.

E. Upon motion made by Keith Gamache, and seconded by Neil Schloth, the CPSE Recommendations were unanimously approved.

7. Policy Matters – None

8. Good and Welfare

- a. Condolences to MaryBeth Palazzolo and family on the passing of her sister, Roberta Johnson

9. Superintendent’s Report

Ms. Ruiz thanked Ms. Lane for attending tonight’s meeting and for establishing the “Keith Lane Visual & Media Arts Scholarship” in memory of her brother. She had the pleasure of meeting Keith during this past summer while a movie was being filmed at the building. Mr. Lane had, on many occasions, spoken to our students and shared his work experiences. Ms. Ruiz offered condolences on his passing and assured Ms. Lane that the District will respect his honor and carry on his name in this scholarship.

### **Achievement**

Our elementary schools recently had parent/teacher conferences on March 15, and March 20, 2017. Productive conversations were focused on the progress of individual students and how to help them achieve greater levels of academic success. In addition, students at Centre Avenue recently completed their informational writing pieces. Topics of research ranged from safari animals in kindergarten to Greek mythology and Greek gods in sixth grade. Many classes used Thinking Maps to help guide their thinking, which were eventually translated into published writing pieces.

Students at Rhame Avenue have begun to work on their third writing piece of the year. Teachers are delivering instruction around opinion and argument writing and all students will be working through the writing process to produce a published “Opinion Response to Fictional Literature or Informational Text.” Our teachers have also been incorporating “Thinking Maps” into the pre-writing process across all grade levels to support students as they organize their thoughts about a

topic and transition that information into a final copy after drafting, revising, editing and conferencing with their peers and teachers. We look forward to seeing these finished pieces displayed throughout the hallways in the near future.

Rhame Avenue participated in this year's National Geographic "GEO BEE" and the school held an actual geography bee across both fifth and sixth grade classrooms. After a winner from each class was selected, the students participated in a larger "bee" in the auditorium where students, parents and teachers were invited to watch. We are pleased to announce that Dimitri Sigrist, a sixth grade student was crowned the Geography Bee winner from Rhame Avenue. We are very proud of his efforts and this accomplishment as his next step will be to take a test that will determine if he moves on to the New York State level of the competition.

Although the DECA Business Club was added just this year, on March 8, 2017, six students from the DECA Club headed to States. Over a three day period, they competed, attended workshops and a dance, and had the opportunity to meet and get to know some of the 2,300 other students from across New York State. Two of our students made it to the final round in their category. Corinne Haab placed in the top ten for "The Job Interview Series," and James Tierney placed in the top ten in "The Public Speaking Series." We would like to congratulate the other four finalists on their achievements; Andrew Schwarzman, Katelyn Reddy, Conor Irvine and Marie Lisondra. Mr. Lores, Mr. Pajer and Ms. Robbins are extremely proud of the success of these six students.

On March 2, 2017, the founder of the Whelan Foundation, Debi Whelan, came to the High School to present our Skills and Achievement Art Program with a check in the amount of \$5,000.00 to be used toward the program.

On March 12, 2017, twelve students ranging from second to eleventh grade from all three schools, exhibited their artwork at the Art Supervisors Associations 2017 All-County Art Exhibit at Farmingdale State College.

### **Opportunity**

The K-Kids at Centre Avenue have teamed up with St. Baldrick's to raise money for childhood cancer research. Their motto is "every little bit counts." The club asked students to bring in donations in the amount of \$0.25 or more. Students created advertisements, flyers to send home to families, announcements, and decorations to represent each student's or family's donation. Several members of the club are volunteering to shave their heads in the club's honor at St. Agnes in Rockville Centre. The goal is to raise at least \$250.

Our sixth grade students are excited to visit the Frost Valley YMCA next week for our annual overnight environmental trip upstate. We are thrilled to be working with the Frost Valley YMCA staff this year and have planned an outstanding adventure filled with engaging activities, team building exercises and lessons that are geared toward building trust and relationships for our students across both elementary schools as part of our transition plan for sixth grade students entering the Junior High school next year.

On April 26, and 27, 2017, there will be a presentation of *Screenagers*, a film about the impact of the digital age on children and how to help them minimize harmful effects and find balance. After seeing the film, people tell us that they feel more confident and better equipped to establish balance around screen time. The film was brought here through a generous grant from Town of Hempstead Supervisor Anthony Santino and Town of Hempstead Councilman Anthony D'Esposito.

Peggy Rakas, the Harry Chapin Practice-a-thon Coordinator for Long Island came to the High School on March 8, 2017, to speak to the band and orchestra students about the Harry Chapin Practice-a-thon, "Turning Music 2 Meals for the Hungry." During the month of March, 2017, musicians across New York State are invited to take part in a Practice-a-Thon with all proceeds going to local food banks. Last year, the Harry Chapin Practice-A-Thon raised \$23,000 for food banks on Long Island and this year, with involvement all across New York, we hope to raise much more. The Practice-a-thon is a wonderful way to strengthen students' practice habits while encouraging empathy and teaching students that their actions can make a difference.

The 81<sup>st</sup> edition of Rock Rivalry concluded with Entrance this past Friday. As always, the event was spirited and engaging. We have so many talented students across so many disciplines and Rock Rivalry gives students the opportunity to showcase and celebrate those talents.

### **Innovation**

In library, the fourth graders at Centre Avenue have just about completed their online keyword search using Google Forms and the World Book Online database. They learned how to summarize the main idea of their favorite book, TV show, or movie by writing Tweets on their fake Twitter page. Students had to write the main idea of a story without giving away any specific names of people, places, or things in 140 characters or less. This not only taught them economy of words, but also how to be safe on the Internet by choosing a safe username and profile picture.

After our ED Camp last Friday on Superintendent's Conference Day, our teachers were inspired to bring new techniques that were learned and shared among colleagues back into their classrooms. A wide variety of professional development offerings were available, as well as a pot luck lunch. Some of the topics included innovative tools and strategies to utilize with their students 1:1 tablets through google classroom, Thinking Maps Software, TED Talks and Engage NY for Mathematics. It was a pleasure to be a part of the collaborative work sessions that took place throughout the day and even more amazing to witness how quickly these new ideas were implemented in the classrooms with students. Teachers were energized and motivated to hit the ground running after such a productive day with new avenues to explore using technology with their students. By all accounts the day was highly beneficial and informative.

The newly-formed ENL Collegial Circle has begun meeting to review best practices and strategies to meet the needs of our ENL students.

### **Connection**

Centre Avenue recently had a very successful PTA Bongo Night on March 3, 2017. Fundraisers

like these help provide special learning opportunities for the students. Examples include different school wide assemblies and funds for various school related events including field trips. The PTA also provides curriculum enhancement opportunities. Teachers in each grade decide how to best use the funds for the students. In kindergarten, the teachers purchase freshly laid eggs from a local farm for the students to take care of and watch as baby chicks are hatched. In other grades there are in-school science workshops from places like the Long Island Children's Museum.

Rhame and Centre Avenue Schools have combined forces to create a Homework Committee this year that includes parents, teachers and students. The charge of the committee is to develop a consistently articulated philosophy and approach to homework in Grades K-6 that aligns to district policy and research based practices in the field of education. This past week, we had our second meeting and worked in small groups to read a variety of research based articles and studies from around the world on the topic of best practices when assigning and reviewing homework. We hope to utilize this valuable information to help create our own philosophy about homework as we continue this very important work together for the remainder of the year.

On March 16, 2017, Advanced Placement United States History students participated in the "Student Symposium" on American Government at Hofstra University, along with 30 other Long Island school districts. Each student wrote an essay prior to prepare them for the discussions.

On March 7, 2017, sixth grade music students visited the high school where they were treated to a faculty performance of Michael Jackson's "I want you Back", followed by a few icebreaker activities. After the icebreakers, the groups were split up into Band, Orchestra and Chorus where they rehearsed with high school students for about an hour. At the conclusion of the rehearsal all three groups performed for their peers.

On April 7, 2017, twenty of our high school students will be travelling to River East Elementary school for the first phase of our annual Rhythm and Rap project. The River East students will be coming to the high school in May to practice and record their original raps with our high school students.

Our Engage Every Family Committee reviewed the results of the Family Engagement survey. Five hundred (500) responses were received and the committee will be using the results to develop our framework. We will be focusing on 4-5 areas as the basis for our framework which include communication, welcoming culture, engaging the greater community, empowering families and supporting student success – linking engagement to learning. Our next meeting is being rescheduled due to a conflict and will take place on April 18, 2017, instead of April 5, 2017. Members will be notified tomorrow.

#### 10. Privilege of the Floor:

Stacy Lane: Ms. Lane questioned the scholarship process; how students were chosen; how checks are applied, fundraiser flyers, etc. Ms. Lane was told to speak to Mr. Spero for more information.

Randi O'Moore: Ms. O'Moore wanted to share an idea that will enhance the STEAM program



using Raspberry PI products. She was told to speak further with Mr. Piccarella.

## 11. Board Member Comments

John Giannotti, Jr.: Mr. Giannotti, Jr. congratulated all the student athletes who were recognized tonight. He wished our sixth grade students good luck on their trip to Frost Valley. He thanked everyone for coming out tonight and looks forward to seeing them in April.

Kristin Ochtera: Ms. Ochtera is thrilled about the progress of the District's Strategic Plan and the connections it is making in the District and in the world around us. Many thanks to Ms. Ruiz for bringing the plan in and getting us focused. Ms. Ochtera also thanked Ms. Scio for her efforts to sustain our budget while supporting the Strategic Plan. She is looking forward to the family engagement survey.

Neil Schloth: Mr. Schloth thanked Ms. Lane for the establishment of the Keith Lane Scholarship. He knew Keith very well; not only from the fire department but also as a cameraman at Nassau County Supreme Court. Mr. Lane was a gentleman and a scholar. We are very appreciative of the scholarship and the support it will give our students. Mr. Schloth reminded the audience that an effort has to be made to get letters out to our local representatives seeking more financial aid for our District. Sixth grade teachers are getting their students involved in the letter writing campaign. PTA presidents have form letters to share with their members. Mr. Schloth thanked everyone involved in the Rock Rivalry presentations. The freshmen class were outstanding. All advisors did a great job. The productions were extraordinary.

Mr. Schloth announced that he will be running for re-election for the Board of Education. He still has a passion and enjoyment for this position and would like to continue it with your support. He asked for the community to consider him for reelection. Mr. Schloth thanked everyone for attending tonight.

Keith Gamache: Mr. Gamache stated that the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) sends out periodic advocacy alerts keeping them informed of important political and policy decisions at the Federal and State levels. As a board, they will advocate for our public schools to the best of their abilities through NYSSBA as well as direct local actions such as the meeting that took place two weeks ago with Assemblyman Curran and the legislative breakfast hosted by the District prior to that.

One recent alert relates to Congress' Act on repealing the ACA. Most of the public has probably followed some of the debate over repealing and replacing the ACA as it relates to individual coverage, but there could also be a significant impact to our schools. School districts receive about \$4 Billion Dollars a year in Medicaid funding. Public school districts use Medicaid funding to provide students in poverty and students with disabilities vital health care and medically necessary services. Restructuring Medicaid to a per capita basis will have a significant impact on the funding schools receive and the level of reimbursement for medical services provided to students. NYSSBA is working closely with NSBA to urge Congress to oppose changes to Medicaid that would negatively impact public school districts. NSBA joined more than 40 other advocacy groups

to send a letter to Congress illustrating the negative consequences of the Medicaid proposal.

Mr. Gamache stated that the Board will continue to advocate for our schools, will strive to keep parents informed, and hopes that they will take the time to contact our state and federal officials individually to help support our children and our schools.

Mr. Gamache reminded the audience about this Saturday's Spring 5K Fundraiser sponsored by the East Rockaway Education Foundation. All are welcome to attend – you can walk and don't have to run. Mr. Gamache also announced that he will be running for re-election as a trustee on the Board of Education. He is proud of the work he has achieved these past three years and with your support, he hopes to continue.

Patti Nicoletti: At the last board meeting, Ms. Nicoletti gave a short update on New York State's guidance on the issues of transgender students and immigrant students. This month, she would like to briefly update the public on two bills recently presented to the Legislature.

Lawmakers at the State and Federal level are continuing to demonstrate their support for the creation of tax credits and voucher programs that would divert public dollars to support nonpublic schools. Congressman Steven King (R-IA) has introduced legislation that, if enacted, would require states to make federal dollars available to parents to use for private school tuition in the form of vouchers (HR 610). At the state level, three different proposals have been advanced in recent weeks to create tax credits for nonpublic school tuition and donations to scholarship programs and foundations (S. 4366, Golden and S.5011, Golden and A.5862 Cusick.)

Parents of public education believe these bills would remove needed funds from the state general fund in the form of vouchers and tax credits at a time when school aid continues to be underfunded. The Education Tax Credit bill proposes measures that would provide tax credits to individuals, corporations, and partnerships that donate money to public, private, and charter schools.

The distribution of already scarce financial resources for education under the provisions of these bills would be uneven and at the discretion of the donors and supporters; distribution would not be based on the educational needs of students in the various school districts throughout New York State.

There is a plethora of information online about school vouchers and education tax credit programs. I urge you to stay informed and seek out more information. Please refer to HR610/Education Tax Credit.

As Mr. Schloth and Mr. Gamache stated, there will be two seats open for the Board of Education. If you are interested in becoming a board member, you will have to pick up a nomination form from Ms. Fazi in the Business Office. Under state law, school board members must be registered voters, at least 18 years old, and have lived in the District for at least one year. They cannot be a school employee, cannot reside in the same household as another school board member, and must be able to read and write English.

Board members serve without compensation. Board members attend at least two regular Board of Education meetings each month along with committee meetings and various school-related activities and keep informed about programs and activities in the district through weekly informational packets from the Superintendent. Board members receive extensive training through the District's own board development materials and through workshops sponsored by the New York State School Boards Association and National School Boards Association to study topics of interest and need.

Ms. Nicoletti said that this Board is very serious about their board training. Ms. Ochtera and Mr. Schloth have achieved the highest level offered by NYSSBA, which is Level IV, Lifetime Achievement. Mr. Giannotti, Jr. and herself, have achieved Level III, Board Mastery, and the "newbie," Mr. Gamache, has received Level II, Board Excellence. These levels do not include the most recent training the board members attended this past year. That will be calculated at the end of this month so those levels may change to a higher level.

Collectively, the Board of Education has the legal responsibility for the operation of the entire district. The Board establishes the policies under which the school district is operated and the Superintendent of Schools is responsible for administering the school program within the context of these policies. In other words, the board oversees the education of students, and is responsible for school district operations, but does not directly run the district's day-to-day operations.

Anyone interested in running for the Board must pick up a nomination form from Ms. Fazi, District Clerk, in the Business Office. Twenty-five (25) signatures are required on the petition. The petition must be returned to Ms. Fazi no later than Monday, April 17, 2017. Even though April 17, 2017, is a school holiday, the Business Office will be open to receive petitions between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm that day.

Ms. Nicoletti thanked everyone for coming and is looking forward to seeing them next month.

12. Upon motion made by Kristin Ochtera, and seconded by Neil Schloth, and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vitina Fazi  
District Clerk